

Book Reviews

Clinical Nephrotoxins, Renal Injury from Drugs and Chemicals. Edited by Mark E de Broc, George A Porter, William M Bennett and Gert A Verpooten. Kluwer Academic Publishers. ISBN 0 7923 3611 9; pp 481; £160.

De Broc and colleagues have set out to produce a comprehensive handbook of chemical injury to the kidneys. The work is divided into three parts: a general section, dealing with clinical relevance, renal handling of drugs, immunological and cellular mechanisms, and a detailed exposition of experimental models; the main body of the work, discussing specific drugs; and a section on prevention including chapters on urinary biomarkers and principles and practice of drug dosing.

The central body of the work is split into 25 short chapters addressing individual drugs or groups of drugs. This section also includes four brief introductions to anti-infectious agents, analgesic related renal injury, immunosuppressive drugs and environmental nephrotoxins. The order of the chapters is necessarily arbitrary but occasionally confusing. The introduction and four individual chapters on environmental nephrotoxins, for instance, are inserted between discussions of contrast associated nephropathy and lithium and the kidney. A chapter on Balkan nephropathy, thought but not proved to be caused by one or more environmental toxins, is tagged on to the end of the section.

Despite the scope of the book there are several areas treated skimpily or ignored altogether. Thus the important association between long term lithium therapy and hyperparathyroidism rates exactly three unreferenced lines of text. The relationship between triamterene and interstitial nephropathy receives little more attention, although references are given. There is a chapter on ACE inhibitors but no mention of ATI receptor blockers. The only anticancer drugs examined are cisplatin and carboplatin; there is no discussion of the tumour lysis syndrome, and an opportunity for practical guidance on an important area of clinical nephrology is therefore lost. The chapter on beta lactam antibiotics is exactly half the length of the discussion of amphotericin B. Organic solvents, silicon compounds and pesticides are covered together in just 12 pages and there is no information on acute poisoning with any of these agents. These problems are compounded by a hopelessly inadequate index of just three pages.

The work will be of more interest to practising nephrologists than to clinical toxicologists and its worth may have been greater if the attempt to cover environmental as well as therapeutic agents had been abandoned. It will nevertheless be a valuable guide to practical aspects of drug dosing and toxicity in nephrology. The final section on drug doses, in particular, will be a great help to nephrologists both in training and career grades (although information on dosing in continuous haemofiltration would have been useful). The manual is likely to find a place on all busy renal units.

PETER GARRETT

Normal and Malignant Liver Cell Growth. Edited by N E Fleig. Kluwer Academic Publishers. ISBN 0792387481. £105

The mechanisms governing normal proliferation and malignant transformation of liver cells are crucial to the understanding of regeneration and hepatocarcinogenesis. The liver has a huge capacity to regenerate following damage by various viruses and toxins. Primary hepatocellular carcinoma is one of the most frequent malignancies world wide. Knowledge in these areas has expanded in recent years and this book details the Proceedings of the International Falk Workshop, Halle, Germany, 1998 which focused on the issues of normal and malignant liver cell growth. Recent advances in basic science and clinical research in these areas are presented. There is also stimulating discussions from an international panel of experts concerning strategies for development in diagnosis and treatment of hepatoma and regeneration in those patients with acute and chronic functional loss of liver tissue.

This is a book which will be of more interest to specialists undertaking research in this area rather than the practising physician/hepatologist, however, the considerable spectrum of views presented from basic science to clinical applications should help clinicians to understand the principles of liver cell regeneration and carcinogenesis and also the basic scientists to understand some of the important clinical observations and questions. This may stimulate further relevant research by bringing bedside questions to be addressed at the laboratory bench.

F A O'CONNOR

Innovative Concepts in Inflammatory Bowel Diseases. Edited by J Emrich, S Liebe, E F Stange. Kluwer Academic Publishers. ISBN 0792387 49X. £125

Chronic inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) are common and the cause(s) unknown. Although there are effective treatments these have to be administered in a largely empirical way and perhaps more than any other conditions in gastroenterology require a good deal of experience on the part of the doctor.

This book presents the papers from an international conference that took place in May 1998 in Rostock on the basic and clinical aspects of inflammatory bowel disease. The main themes of the meeting were genetics, animal models, immunology, epithelial cells, endotoxin, diagnostic procedures, malignancy, medical therapies and surgery.

The book stretches to 359 pages with the first 215 devoted to experimental data on the possible causes and mechanisms of disease. No definitive aetiology emerged but there were lots of interesting findings. It provides much food for thought for any researchers who want to know the current state of knowledge and to decide what area they might most profitably explore themselves. Our own Mr Keith Gardiner from the Queen's University Department of Surgery has written a chapter on the detection of endotoxin in IBD. The chapter on autoantibodies in IBD includes a useful examination of the data on antibodies to neutrophils (pANCA), a test which is making its way into clinical practice. Some contributors have helpfully provided a summary at the end of their chapters. For the non specialist it would have been helpful if every author